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ABSTRACT

Six major areas of part-time college faculty employment practices are discussed that illustrate how current practice can be detrimental to part-time faculty performance. Attention is directed to appointment, support services, communication with peers, participation in governance, compensation, and job security. The following areas that require improvement are addressed: development of a qualified pool of applicants for part-time positions; development of a contract for part-timers; emphasis on the integration of part- and full-time faculty; including part-timers in faculty governance and departmental decisions; provision of an equitable compensation structure for part-time faculty based on qualifications, assignment, and performance, with provision for cost-of-living increases; provision of appropriate degrees of job security for different types of part-time faculty, with consideration to renewal, retrenchment, and dismissal; special programs to help part-time faculty become and remain effective, including access to faculty development programs; and development of an evaluation system aimed at improving teaching effectiveness. It is suggested that departmental autonomy should be replaced by central responsibility for part-time faculty to insure fair and humane treatment. (SW)

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EMPLOYING PART-TIME FACULTY: Thoughtful Approaches to Continuing Problems

by Judith M. Gappa

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Nearly a third of all faculty teaching in American colleges and universities today do so on a part-time basis.[1] Part-timers—their numbers exceed 220,000 individuals—in one recent survey handled 28% of all undergraduate instruction and 21% of all graduate-level work.[2] Part-time faculty will teach the majority of American students during their time in college, frequently during the crucial lower-division years.

Part-time faculty play key roles in most institutions' ability to deliver first-rate educational services. These people's status and well being, and especially their teaching performance, should be a matter of high concern to everyone who worries about quality in higher education, from policy makers to students.

Despite their numbers and importance, though, part-time faculty as a group have been the subject of too little study and thoughtful policy-making. Institutions have been content to pay them poorly, use them as needed, keep them at a distance from governance circles, and ignore questions of their long-term welfare. Often, part-time faculty are academic pariahs, exploited with impunity, even as they are asked to stand ready in contingent labor pools to help institutions in periods of unstable enrollments and shifting program demand.[3]

The use of part-timers rose in the past decade and may yet increase in the years ahead. In varying degrees, part-time faculty are resentful and frustrated with their situations, often with good reason, though on balance they are satisfied enough to continue. Many may put aside monetary and status needs for the rewards they find in teaching.

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The failure to extend to part-timers the benefits and collegial privileges of academic employment indicates that institutions have not recognized that part-time faculty can be a major asset to their educational programs and community relationships. Tuckman and Tuckman pose the issue this way:

Whether they [part-timers] will become a larger force in the next two decades will depend, in large part, on the policies that institutions of higher education will adopt in the next few years. Part-timers are neither good nor bad for academe in their own right. Instead they are a diverse group with many different motives and goals. Whether we learn to employ them in a constructive manner will surely be one of the most fascinating questions of the '80's.[4]

The Issues

Institutional policies for the employment of part-time faculty generally do not take into account the differences among individuals and tend to reinforce part-timers' perception that they are academe's second-class citizens. Six major areas of part-time faculty employment practices are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs. They illustrate how current practice can be detrimental to part-time faculty performance.

Appointment

Part-time faculty get their first introduction to the employing institution through the appointment process. A few institutions have formal and open recruiting and hiring procedures.[5] However, results of a study by Leslie and associates showed that over 60 percent of the reporting institutions used primarily personal contacts and informal processes to find applicants. This process generally hinges on enrollment. Sufficient enrollment has to be assured to guarantee full-time faculty workloads before making any commitment to part-time or temporary faculty. Fifty-two percent of the institutions in Leslie's survey hire

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part-time faculty primarily on that basis.[6]

Part-time faculty are aware of the tenuous nature of their appointment. When a course section fails to meet minimum enrollment standards, or when full-time faculty loads have to be guaranteed, part-timers are released to accommodate the change. Seventy-five percent of the institutions surveyed allowed "bumping" of contracted part-time faculty in favor of full-timers.[7]

George Van Arsdale characterized part-time faculty feelings about the uncertainty that accompanies semester-by-semester hiring based on enrollment:

Perhaps no gesture more clearly indicates the tenuous character of the relationship the university wishes to maintain with its part-time faculty than its form of contract. In the nine years of my tenure as "Associate Faculty," I have accumulated more than 25 of these documents, for they are issued for each semester and each summer term, usually in the last two weeks or so before the first class sessions. . . . After so many years and so many contracts, the opening paragraph seems to describe my experience less than my feeling of anxiety and the university's wish: "Associate faculty appointments are on a temporary basis in accord with University policy and are subject to cancellation if enrollment is inadequate. Also, if teaching schedules need to be reassigned because of low enrollment, priority will be given to resident (i.e., full-time) faculty." For many colleagues, both in my department and in others, distressing cancellations and changes of both course and schedule are not infrequent.[8]

Enrollment-driven decisions have an obvious effect on classes and students. When part-time faculty contracts are issued a few days before (or even after) a semester or term begins, part-timers wind up with too little time to prepare lesson plans, order books, or develop syllabi.

Support Services

Part-time faculty rarely enjoy the level of support for their work that full-timers have. Part-timers spend an average of 17½ hours each week in activities related to their part-time employment. About five hours are devoted to classroom teaching, and a like amount of time is spent in class preparation. Research takes less than two hours a week. Advising students and other institutionally-related activities occupy the remaining hours of the part-timer's week.[9]

Part-time faculty will teach the majority of American students during their time in college, frequently during the crucial lower-division years.

Despite this average weekly schedule, 57 percent of the part-time faculty surveyed by Tuckman had no office at all and 32 percent shared an office. Only 11 percent had private offices.[10] Some part-time faculty use office facilities associated with their primary employment. If they hold responsible positions in other occupations and their teaching at the local college or university is viewed as prestigious, the primary employers may provide space, time, and secretarial support.[11]

One method of providing office space for part-time faculty is the "bullpen." The rationale is simple. If the faculty member is teaching one-fifth of a normal load, then he or she only needs one-fifth of an office. The bullpen approach does not allow uninterrupted, one-on-one contact with students; it often is useless for tutoring and advising. The absence of adequate office space for part-time faculty signals to students that these teachers have second-rate status. Status can be a serious problem when a teacher deals with nontraditional students who see office space as a measure of success.[12] Part-timers frequently hold "office hours" in campus coffee shops, student lounges, or even their own homes. The effect of make-shift arrangements may be to discourage students from seeking the assistance they need.

Telephones, secretarial help, and graduate assistants are seldom available to part-time faculty on the same basis as for full-time faculty. Frequently, part-time faculty use their own phones, postage stamps, and typewriters to get their work done. Partly this is because part-timers may be teaching off campus, during evening hours, or on weekends and are out of phase with the times and locations at which support services are available.[13]

The lack of office space and support services was one of the most persistent sources of frustration and anger found in the interviews with part-time faculty conducted during Leslie's study. Part-time faculty felt blocked from doing a good job by their lack of access to basic resources. Institutions may save direct costs of space and services, but they incur indirect costs in the resulting frustrations and waste of time.[14] This frustration was epitomized in one part-timer's comment:

At our new campus . . . approximately 200 part-time faculty members . . . have "offices" in one large room divided into some twenty six-by-six-foot cubicles, each made smaller by the presence of two four-drawer filing cabinets, a flat-top table with a single drawer, and two chairs. University space is always costly and in short supply, but six to ten part-time faculty assigned to . . . each cubicle would not represent a reasonable cost-benefit to a university that truly valued its teaching staff.[15]

Often, part-time faculty are academic pariahs, exploited with impunity, even as they are asked to stand ready in contingent labor pools to help institutions in periods of unstable enrollments and shifting program demand.

Communication with Peers

Peer contact among full-time faculty is natural and frequent. For part-time faculty, the contrast can be chilling:

Rushing in at about 7:30 one morning, I noticed a faculty member coming out of the office, about to shut the door, which wouldn't be reopened till the secretaries got in at 8:30. "Oh, don't shut that door. May I get in the office for a minute?" "Well, I suppose so," he said, looking me up and down and obviously wondering who I was and what I wanted. "I'll just grab my mail," I explained, doing just that and dashing right back out of the office making no attempt to steal a typewriter. "Oh," he said, "do you teach here?" He had the grace to blush and try to cover the incident with a joke. "Well, I'm sorry but we do try to step on you part-timers as often as possible, you know." "Yes," I said, not taking a joke very well at 7:30. "And you do it quite often and with great effect."[16]

Because of the lack of office space and opportunity to meet informally with peers, part-time faculty may feel devoid of status in the academic community:

The most common problem for the adjunct is the relative difficulty of communication. Unlike the regular faculty, he does not have lunch, coffee breaks, and casual conversation with colleagues or administrators. Being set apart from this community, he can expect to receive requests for information several days after the deadline for furnishing it.[17]

The writings of part-time faculty indicate that many perceive the institution as bent on communicating its authority to temporary workers who feel terribly insecure to begin with and need no reminders about who holds power. The casual sharing of information about teaching methods, materials, and student problems too seldom occurs. The uncertain access to information, doubts about reappointment, and the sense of having lower status can give rise to fear in the part-timer:

For those of us who need these paychecks to buy our groceries, the whole system is ruled by uncertainty and fear. . . . What if I have some trouble with a student? If there is any controversy, you won't be rehired. Old hands tell you to fail a paper for its comma faults, not for obvious plagiarism, because you don't want to risk a student's challenge. All this makes for teaching on tiptoe.[18]

If part-time faculty are not part of regular communication channels and are apprehensive about future employment, students also suffer. Part-timers may not know about special campus events to announce in their classes, or about resources they or their students can use to improve teaching and learning. Part-time faculty may be hesitant to make rigorous demands of their students, fearing poor student evaluations.

Studies of equity in compensation between full and part-time faculty have found that no simple measures exist to compare the credentials and workloads of part and full-time faculty.

Participating in Governance

Part-time faculty are essentially disenfranchised persons in academic governance. Most find few avenues through which to exercise either formal or informal influence over departmental or institutional decisions.

To the extent part-timers have any influence, it is generally at the departmental level. Forty-two percent of the sample in Leslie's study reported that part-time faculty had either a full or proportional vote in departmental decisions. A quarter of the surveyed institutions reported that they extended institutional-level voting privileges to part-time faculty. More often, part-timers participate in governance as observers, or have speaking privileges only.[19]

A caution is needed in discussing the effects of part-timers' limited participation in governance. Many part-time faculty express satisfaction with their lack of involvement in governance. Some legitimately need to limit their involvement because they have full-time jobs elsewhere. Also, many part-time faculty are actually full-time faculty teaching an overload. Whatever their status, some part-time faculty perceive committee work and the politics of collegiate decision-making to be distracting and a drudgery. They can avoid time-consuming involvement without pangs of conscience.[20]

Compensation

There are three major salary patterns for part-time faculty: the hourly rate, in which each hour spent in class is counted as an hour for pay purposes; the semester rate, which provides a fixed sum for credit or contact hour per semester; and the *pro rata* schedule, which is computed as a fraction of the current salary for full-time faculty.

Pro rata salaries might be based on a particular set of full-time faculty salaries or on the full range of full-time salaries.[21] The full-time salary to be pro rated is reduced by the percentage of time spent in non-teaching assignments in the full-time workload. This is usually a reduction of 1/3 to 1/2 of the full-time salary.

Because of many variables, part-time faculty pay per course is usually 1/2 to 4/5 the amount for a similar class taught by a full-time instructor on a yearly salary regardless of the method of compensation used.[22]

Studies of equity in compensation between full and part-time faculty have found that no simple measures exist to compare the credentials and workloads of part and

If part-time faculty are not part of regular communication channels and are apprehensive about future employment, students also suffer.

full-time faculty. Tuckman and Caldwell hypothesized that salary differentials would be accounted for by differences in education, experience, quality of institution attended, and related personal and institutional characteristics. According to their calculations, this hypothesis explained more than 65 percent of the variation in full-time salaries across universities, but only 20 percent of the variation in part-time salaries. Part-time salaries appeared to be influenced more by institutional policies and market differences than by personal skills and qualifications.[23]

Part-timers frequently do not have built-in cost-of-living increases for length of service. Since full-timers do receive such increments, part-time faculty who retain their positions are likely to fall behind their full-time counterparts over time even if they are hired at equivalent salary rates.[24] Low and relatively decreasing salaries for part-time faculty make them an attractive labor resource for colleges facing hard times.[25] Tuckman and Caldwell predict that if the number of part-time faculty continues to grow and if institutions continue to pay them according to established practices, an increasing number of part-timers will become dissatisfied with their compensation.[26]

Job Security

Full-time faculty in tenure-track positions are given appropriate notice regarding their contract status; their contracts do not simply run out. In contract, part-timers ineligible for tenure have no right to assume that their contracts will be renewed, even if they perform well, since their appointment is based on enrollment. It is common practice to give such faculty no notice and no reason for dismissal.[27]

In 1980, the College and University Personnel Association surveyed 795 institutions regarding their tenure and retrenchment practices. They found that tenure is rarely awarded to a person in a part-time, temporary role. Only 14 percent of the institutions surveyed offered tenure to part-time continuing faculty. In these institutions, tenure eligibility imposed the same service and other requirements involved in tenure decisions for full-time faculty.[28]

The CUPA survey showed that retrenchment practices conform with academic tradition and such constraints as collective-bargaining contracts and state funding requirements. For example, the passage of Proposition 13 in California was felt by the community colleges immediately since about one-third of their funding came from local property taxes. Administrators and trustees hastily cancelled summer school, reduced course offerings for the fall, increased class sizes, and laid off seven thousand (just under 25 percent) part-time faculty. But the number of full-time faculty was reduced by only 2 percent. (Some of the part-time faculty who were laid off were actualy full-time faculty teaching an overload).[29]

The California example underscored what part-timers have long known—that the primary feature of their status in higher education is their expendability. It also underscores the relationship between part-time faculty employment and educational programs: the expendability of part-time faculty meant larger classes and fewer course offerings for the California community college students.

Meeting the Challenge

The challenge now is to insure that institutional policies and practices enhance rather than diminish part-time faculty morale and teaching performance. To meet this challenge, changes in the employment of part-timers are crucial.

Treating part-time faculty employment as a casual departmental affair instead of as a central institutional concern is a mistake. The academic and financial needs of the institution are important, as are the institution's interests in seeing that part-time faculty realize improved status, compensation, and services.[30] Free-wheeling departmental autonomy (with attendant abuses) should be replaced by central responsibility for part-time faculty to insure fair and humane treatment.[31]

Employment practices have to be flexible. Institutions should take into account the differences between part-time faculty members in their qualifications, the functions they perform, and their contributions to the school's educational objectives. Institutions should develop an equitable classification plan that differentiates among part-timers, based on their characteristics and the reasons for which they were employed, then develop policies that reflect these differences.

The challenge is not to achieve parity with full-time faculty. Rather it is for institutions to have clearly articulated, well-understood, humane, and equitable policies based on good knowledge of the differences among part-timers. The polarization between full-time tenured faculty and part-time temporary faculty should be avoided. Faculty employment should be seen as a continuum, embracing the entire instructional staff from full-time tenured faculty, to fully qualified continuing part-time faculty interested in teaching careers, to contingency faculty hired to meet enrollment demand on a one-time basis. Individuals and institutions both will be better served when different policies are in place for different part-time classifications.

Free-wheeling departmental autonomy (with attendant abuses) should be replaced by central responsibility for part-time faculty to insure fair and humane treatment.

Institutions should examine the effects of policy on part-time faculty employment and make improvements consistent with their financial resources, educational objectives, and sound legal principles. Improvements are needed in the following areas:

- **Appointment**: Development of a qualified pool of applicants for part-time faculty positions.
- **Contracts**: Development of a contract for part-timers that articulates the institution's requirements while specifying the part-timer's rights.
- **Support Services and Communication Networks**: Emphasis on integration of part- and full-time faculty and on giving part-time faculty a sense of dignity and belonging.
- **Governance**: Erring on the side of inclusion rather than exclusion in faculty governance and departmental deliberations, particularly with regard to curricula, courses, and teaching materials.
- **Compensation and Fringe Benefits**: Provision of an equitable compensation structure for part-time faculty based on their qualifications, assignment, and performance, with provision for cost-of-living increases.
- **Job Security**: Provision of appropriate degrees of job security for different types of part-time faculty, with thoughtful treatment of their interests in renewal, retrenchment, and dismissal.
- **Orientation and Development**: Special programs to help part-time faculty become and remain effective instructors, including access to faculty development programs and funds.
- **Evaluation**: Development of an evaluation system aimed at improving teaching effectiveness, one that articulates clear standards of performance as one basis for reappointment.

Many part-timers may fairly be characterized as reluctant victims of a system that exploits them. Some are dissatisfied and vocal about their working conditions. Yet they persist and abide in higher education, and they teach an increasingly larger share of courses. Part-timers *want* to teach, and no one has persuasively shown that they teach with less positive effect than regular full-time faculty.

Institutions, in turn, gain important financial and curricular advantages by employing part-time faculty. Most colleges and universities *want* them to teach. Thus, it is in everyone's best interest to insure that employment policies and practices enhance rather than discourage part-time faculty teaching performance.

This paper is based on "Part-Time Faculty in Higher Education," an ASHE-ERIC/Higher Education Research Report, forthcoming, November, 1984.

Notes

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[4] Howard P. Tuckman and Barbara H. Tuckman, "Who are the Part-Timers and What are Colleges Doing for them?" *Part-Time Faculty in Colleges and Universities. Current Issues in Higher Education,* 1981, No. 4. (Washington: American Association for Higher Education) p. 7.

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[6] Leslie, et.al. pp. 73-76.

[7] Leslie, et.al. pp. 88-89.

[8] George Van Arsdale, "De-professionalizing a Part-Time Teaching Faculty: How Many, Feeling Small, Seeming Few, Getting Less, Dream of More." *The American Sociologist* 13. (November 1978) p. 196.

[9] Howard P. Tuckman and William D. Vogler, "The 'Part' in Part-Time Wages." *AAUP Bulletin* 64. (May 1978) p. 73.

[10] Tuckman and Vogler, p. 74.

[11] Leslie et. al. p. 81.

[12] Richard D. Greenwood, "Making 'What's-His-Face' Feel at Home: Integrating Part-Time Faculty." *Using Part-Time Faculty Effectively,* edited by Michael H. Parsons. New Directions for Community Colleges, No. 30. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980) p. 56.

[13] Leslie et.al. pp. 80-81.

[14] Emily F. Abel, "Invisible and Indispensible: Part-Time Teachers in California Community Colleges." (Santa Monica, CA: Santa Monica College, 1976); Leslie, et.al.; and Tuckman and Vogler.

[15] Van Arsdale, p. 197.

[16] Cara Chell, "Memoirs and Confessions of a Part-Time Lecturer." *College English* 44. (January 1982) p. 39.

[17] Richard R. Beman, "Observations of an Adjunct Faculty Member." In *Using Part-Time Faculty Effectively,* edited by Michael H. Parsons. New Directions for Community Colleges, No. 30. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980)

[18] Chel, p. 38.

[19] Leslie et.al. pp. 86-87.

[20] Leslie et. al. p. 86.

[21] John Lombardi, "Salaries for Part-Time Faculty: New Trends." *Community College Review* 3. (January 1976)

[22] Lombardi 1976; Tuckman and Tuckman 1981.

[23] Howard P. Tuckman and Jaime Caldwell, "The Reward Structure for Part-Timers in Academe." *The Journal of Higher Education* 50. (November/December 1979) pp. 750-753.

[24] Howard P. Tuckman, William D. Vogler, and Jaime Caldwell, "Part-Timers and the Academic Labor Market of the Eighties." *The American Sociologist* 13. (November 1978) pp. 184-195, and Tuckman and Caldwell 1979.

[25] Leslie et.al. and Tuckman and Tuckman.

[26] Tuckman and Caldwell, p. 756-759.

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[29] Abel, p. 11.

[30] Ronald B. Head, *Legal Issues Relating to Part-Time Faculty Employment.* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, March 1979)

[31] Leslie et. al.

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